

July 15, 2022

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Ambassador Susan Rice
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden and Ambassador Rice,

The National Alliance for Nutrition and Physical Activity (NANA) Coalition applauds the Biden-Harris Administration's plan to convene a White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. The first conference occurred more than 50 years ago, spurring the movement toward the Nutrition Facts panel and leading to the creation and expansion of critical nutrition and anti-hunger safety net programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and the National School Breakfast and Lunch Programs (school meals). The challenges we now face still encompass hunger, but reach far beyond. These include an epidemic of diet-related disease, COVID-19-related morbidity partly associated with many of these diseases, a food environment that does not support healthy eating, and much more. Further, diet-related diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers are leading causes of preventable death and disability. We hope this Conference will accelerate progress to reduce the impact and burden of preventable diet-related disease and end hunger.

Nutrition insecurity, food insecurity, and diet-related chronic diseases disproportionately affect people of color as well as low-income, rural, and other underserved populations. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the existing weaknesses of our food system that contribute to these disparities. Although overall food insecurity levels remained relatively stable during the pandemic—likely attributable to COVID-19 waiver flexibilities and increased investments in nutrition programs such as SNAP, WIC, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and school meals—food insecurity among children increased and existing inequities in food security widened between Black and Latine families when compared to White families.

As a country, we must do more to address the twin epidemics of diet-related disease and hunger, and this Conference has the potential to create a roadmap to modernize and enhance our food system and its connections with other support systems, including child care and health care sectors. The Conference can advance us toward an improved food system infrastructure that is just, resilient, and sustainable - **a system in which all residents of the United States have equitable access to adequate, affordable, safe, culturally appropriate, and nutritious food. As such, we make the following recommendations for the Conference and the strategic plan that is under development:**

1. **Establish concrete goals and initiatives that improve food and nutrition security.** As announced, the Conference calls for ending hunger and increasing healthy eating and physical activity by 2030 so that fewer Americans experience diet-related diseases like diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. These aspirations should be complemented by quantifiable, actionable goals to increase healthy eating, reduce nutrition insecurity and diet-related diseases, and develop metrics for assessing nutrition security. The Administration should integrate and build on existing objectives from the 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans as well as Healthy People 2030,

which includes relevant goals such as the following: reduce consumption of added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium and increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

2. **Establish a federal coordinated strategy to strengthen nutrition and health, addressing the Conference's five pillars and breaking down silos across federal, state, and local agencies.** To achieve this goal, we urge the Conference organizers to examine systems change approaches and policies that foster cross-sector collaboration and seamless connection between social service programs. Cross-sector coordination and collaboration can improve health, food security, and nutrition. The Conference should highlight existing innovative, successful, and scalable approaches and develop recommendations to further catalyze multi-sector partnerships and systems that can provide connection to nutrition supports for underserved communities, including the food, child care, education, and health care systems. Finally, we recommend that the Conference establish a cross-agency body to coordinate food and nutrition efforts across the whole of government.
3. **Center equity in the Conference design and outreach efforts.** Food system inequities reflect long-standing structural and institutional racism. We recommend that food justice, health equity, and racial justice principles and strategies permeate the content of the Conference and strategic plan to ensure recommendations that promote equity are the cornerstone of the nation's new food and nutrition policy agenda. We commend the Conference organizers for soliciting a diverse group of stakeholders, with lived experience and expertise in the aforementioned areas to inform the Conference agenda, and encourage that this outreach continue. Members of the populations most burdened by food system inequities, as well as the child care providers, schools and health care providers who serve them from geographically diverse areas, should be included as subject matter experts to substantively inform and shape all aspects of the Conference.
4. **Promote a transparent and collaborative Conference planning process.** We are excited by the wide range of stakeholder input that will fuel the Conference and strategic plan, and see an opportunity to share and build on the variety of good ideas stakeholders submitted. As such, we recommend that the administration make the online submissions for Conference ideas public, similar to the regulatory process. We also urge you to make the proposed agenda for the Conference available for public comment, as required in S.3064/H.R.5724. As part of this agenda, we urge you to include a list of proposed topics and a list of in-person invitees.

The NANA Coalition stands ready to work together with you to create a robust plan to improve nutrition security and make these recommendations into reality. Thank you again for your leadership in advancing these important issues.

Please note, endorsement of these recommendations overall does not imply that signatories have taken a position on every recommendation. Please reach out to Jacob Multer (jmulter@cspinet.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Center for Science in the Public Interest

International Fresh Produce Association
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National WIC Association
Nemours Children's Health